THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH GANGWAR): (a) Russian production of crude oil has been marginally more than that of Saudi Arabia in February, 2002. As per 'Oil Marketing Report' published by the Paris based International Energy Agency, in its April' 02 edition, the estimated crude oil production by Saudi Arabia (excluding Neutral Zone) was about 7.15 million barrels per day in March' 02 while actual in February' 02 was 6.91 million barrels per day. The production figure for Russia during this period was 7.32 million barrels per day estimated for March' 02 and 7 35 million barrels per day actual for February' 02.

(b) OPEC countries are important suppliers of crude oil to India. However, increased production of crude oil by Russia will be beneficial to the consuming economies as this may result in a corresponding increase in supply of crude oil to the market.

(c) Indian refineries have technical capability of processing Russian crude oils and some of the refineries have identified Russian grade for trial processing. However, due to long haul and transportation disadvantage through Suez Canal, the grade was never competitive in our system compared to other grades in the basket of acceptable crude oils.

Conditions for marketing of petroleum products

5075. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have allowed nine companies to market petroleum products after administered price mechanisam is dismantled from April 1, 2002;

(b) if so, the names of the companies;

(c) the conditions to be fulfilled by these companies for the purpose; and

(d) the other details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH GANGWAR): (a) to (d) Government have not granted authorization to market transportation fuels to any new entrant, so far. However, Government have laid down the guidelines for granting authorization to market transportation fuels to the new entrants vide its resolution dated 8th March, 2002.